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ABSTRACT

A two-part study was designed to measure the amount of good news and bad news in newspapers and to measure readers' recall of stories that represented good news and bad news. The stories used in the study appeared on the front pages and on one of the inside pages of eight California newspapers during October 1978. A total of 559 telephone interviews were completed within one week of good news and bad news stories selected from the October 16, 1978 newspapers. The content analysis of papers showed an approximate split among good, bad, and indeterminate news, with a slightly higher bad news percentage overall. Contrary to expectations, afternoon papers contained no more bad news than did morning papers, although one afternoon paper registered the least good news and two afternoon papers registered the highest levels of bad news. The range from a 50-50 split of good news to bad varied only about eight percent. Including an "indeterminate" classification of news stories in the study resulted in an unexpectedly large percentage of total content in this category, precluding precise analysis. The single consistent finding in the public impact analysis was that no difference occurred in public recall of good versus bad news stories. (RL)

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'GOOD' NEWS VS. 'BAD': A RELATIVE IMPACT INVESTIGATION

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'GOOD' NEWS VS. 'BAD': A RELATIVE IMPACT INVESTIGATION

In 1978 The Sunday Times of London gave Prince Charles a 30th birthday present--a full front-page column of good news. At a press awards luncheon earlier that year, the heir to the British throne complained of a newspaper propensity to print only what's going wrong.[1]

Does this sound familiar? Echoes of Spiro Agnew? It was on November 13, 1969, that then-Vice President Agnew initiated a campaign against the media in his Des Moines, Iowa, speech, charging the networks with overemphasizing stories of dissent, lawlessness and controversy.[2]

But before Agnew's criticism, some editors of the nation's newspapers apparently perceived the public's demand for "good" news. The Arizona Republic ran a "good news" feature titled "The Brighter Side" and the Miami News printed a "non-violent" issue on May 16, 1969, with all stories of a violent nature including features and sports scrubbed. Readers of the Florida experiment had general positive reactions, but most recognized that the reporting of only "good" news would preclude the presentation of an accurate and complete picture of the world.[3]

Contrary to the critics who demand more "good" news, readership research shows much of what is considered "bad" news is more frequently read than the "good" news. In a massive survey in 1955, Charles E. Swanson showed stories most widely read were about

war, defense, fire-disaster, human interest, weather, individuals, major crime, social significance, consumer information and science-invention. The ten least read categories were finance, agriculture, country correspondence, religion-church-morals, minor crimes, state government, sports, fine arts-music-literature, social relations and taxes.[4]

Guido H. Stempel III conducted a study to develop empirically some categories of reader interest in news. He asked respondents to indicate their interest in a story based on a series of headlines. Stempel concluded respondents showed a diverse interest in news. He suggested that the complexity of reader interest and readership patterns is not solely a product of the way news is presented to the reader. Additional findings of interest were: (1) interest in national politics and government seemed unrelated to interest in politics and government at lower levels; (2) the economic aspect or lack of it in a story is of primary interest for many readers; (3) suspense or conflict may in itself create interest in a story, regardless of topic, and that crime stories need not be the only ones using this appeal.[5]

Probing into readers' preferences in stories, Robert W. Clyde looked at stories which had been rated pleasant, unpleasant, important, unimportant, interesting and boring in the Minneapolis Star. The study showed unpleasant stories were more read than important stories. There was no distinction in the total reading of unpleasant and interesting fare.[6]

Another researcher, Jack B. Haskins, suggests a "cloud with a silver lining" approach to bad news. He stated that although people prefer to read bad news, they also prefer optimism to pessimism. He

synthesized these two views with this hypothesis: "News about violence supplemented by information that promises greater understanding and/or improvement in the situation will have higher reader interest than a straight news treatment of the same topic." The results of his study verified this hypothesis.[7]

The present research was launched by the question, How much good news and how much bad news does the newspaper actually print? This was asked by Alfred JaCoby, the San Diego Union's ombudsman, who functions as the morning newspaper's readers' representative. In his appearances before groups and in discussing with individuals the news published in the San Diego Union, he said he often found readers complaining that they read mostly bad news.

Hence, he suggested research into the actual balance of good and bad news presented. Research was planned to determine if there was more bad news in newspapers, or if readers simply remember the bad news they read longer than the good news and therefore perceive a larger amount of bad news published.

Operational Definitions

Researchers were aware that determining what is good news and what is bad is a highly subjective task, the mechanics of which are not completely understood. What may seem to be good news to one person may seem to be bad to another. Researcher Walter Gieber, in a 1953 study of newsplay of Indiana newspapers, evolved a negative-positive-other scheme of classifying content which suggests both simplicity and completeness. Gieber considered negative those items which report social conflicts and disorganization such as international

tension, conflict between nations, the military, political or economic; civic disruptions with conflict between groups in political, economic and social areas; crime and vice, and accidents and disasters. He considered positive those items reporting interenational cooperation; information (non-controversial) on affairs of government; information about the groups of persons cooperating in non-governmental affairs, and news items about individuals (Life Goes On" he termed it). In the other category he put what he called the oddities of life, the "brighteners," sports and entertainment.[8]

For the present research, good news, bad news and a third category, indeterminate news, were selected with these definitions:

1. A good story or picture is one for which the majority of the local paper's readers would be satisfied or pleased that the event had happened or happened as it did. The tone of the story will be generally positive or upbeat: controversy settled or avoided; hint of promise for hope; suggestions for improvement; bad guy is caught; police find clues; economy up; new building planned.

2. A bad story or picture is one judged to be negative or in the opposite direction.

3. An indeterminate story or picture is one for which, in the opinion of the coder, there is no clear distinction, which contains approximately equal amounts of good and bad, or which leaves doubt how the majority of local readers might respond to it.

Hypotheses

Based on the journalistic definition of news being something that disturbs the status quo, the researchers felt the content analysis

of papers would reveal that news decisions result in bad news stories getting a disproportionately large share of space in newspapers and, following the same logic, that bad news would tend to dominate the front page of papers and would be less pervasive (though still a majority of the stories) on the inside pages.

1) Bad news is emphasized in daily newspapers and dominates the front page. A majority of inside page stories also will be bad news, but the ratio of bad news on the inside pages will be lower than that found on page one.

2) Afternoon newspapers will have larger amounts of bad news than morning papers, at least on page one, a practice dating back to the time when afternoon newspapers depended on street sales and traditionally played more sensational stories (often bad news) on page one for buyer appeal.

For the analysis of the impact of good and bad news on the public consciousness, the following set of hypotheses is offered:

3) There is no difference in impact between good and bad news.

a. the public will remember one type of news no more than the other;

b. there will be no significant difference in recall of details between good news and bad news stories.

4) Recall of both good and bad news stories will drop somewhat between the first and third interview days and will drop signifi-

cantly between the third and seventh interview days.

5) Recall of both good and bad news will be related to readership frequency with recall being higher for more frequent readers.

6) Males will remember all news categories more than will females.

7) The impact of news will be significantly different depending on the discrete news values of eminence-prominence, proximity, novelty, etc., rather than just the umbrella categories of good versus bad news. These more discrete news values will cut across the good-bad division.

8) Recall during all days will be greater depending on media saliency. Recall will be greater if news stories are: closer to the front of the newspaper; higher on the page; displayed with larger headlines; run with a picture, and also presented on television and radio.

Methodology

A research project was designed in two parts. The first was to measure the amount of good and bad news, using arbitrarily assigned definitions of good and bad news. The second was to measure the recall of readers concerning stories which were generally thought to represent good news and bad news.

The study included both a content analysis of local newspapers and a random telephone survey of residents exposed to those newspapers in the Southern California areas of Long Beach-

Orange County and San Diego.

Eight Southern California daily newspapers were selected for the research, newspapers circulating in the communities of Long Beach and San Diego. These included the Long Beach Independent, the Long Beach Press-Telegram, the Los Angeles Times, the Los Angeles Herald-Examiner, the Orange County Register, the South Bay Breeze, the San Diego Union and the San Diego Evening Tribune.

In the study the Los Angeles Times was treated as two papers because both the Orange County edition and the San Diego County edition were measured.

For the first part of the study, journalism students at California State University--Long Beach and San Diego State University coded all the stories on the front page and on one inside page of the nine newspapers. The stories were coded daily for one month, October, 1978. Each student coded two newspapers so that all papers were coded independently by at least two students.

Using the definitions of good and bad news, students at Long Beach and San Diego performed trials on different front pages of area newspapers and made a decision on each piece of news content.

Stories and pictures were coded as separate entities. Each headline was considered part of the story; each cutline, part of the picture. The story length was not counted and jumped stories were counted as only one story. The story was judged in whole. Each coder was instructed to weigh the tone of the major portion of the article or picture to determine its effect on the reader.

The inside page was alternated daily to ensure that all sections of the newspaper would be represented. Either the page number

of the day's date was used or the date was multiplied by two, three or four. The day of the week determined the number used for multiplication. Toward the end of the month, when newspapers occasionally contained fewer pagers than the number reached by multiplication and when the inside page contained only advertising, coders selected an adjacent page to rate.

Training sessions were conducted for the student coders with Long Beach students reaching an 83 per cent intercoder reliability level and the San Diego students reaching a 79 per cent intercoder reliability. Analysis of their decisions indicated that without the indeterminate category (i e., if coders had been forced to make a choice on every article), the intercoder reliability would have been greatly increased. But as the intent was to measure the amount of good or bad news in area newspapers, project directors decided not to force the choice assuming some stories realistically would not fall into either category. Although an intercoder reliability check was not made on the final tabulations, there is no reason to suspect reliability deviated from the measures taken during the trials. Tabulations by the multiple coders were combined and averaged for the analysis.

The telephone survey employed a table of random numbers to access the white pages of local telephone books and to select actual entries on those pages. Each interviewer was given a list of the telephone book pages and the number to be called on each selected page. The code paper date was Monday, October 16, a date pre-selected to avoid weekend calls. Interviewers made evening calls October 17, one day after the code date; called another set of numbers October 19, three days after the code date; and made a final set of calls October 23, one week after the code date.

Project directors selected two stories from the October 16 newspapers in their areas: one good news story and one bad news story. An effort was made to begin selection of stories below the fold on page one (to avoid stories that would definitely be aired on radio and television), and to keep stories balanced by distance into the newspaper and placement on the page. Descriptions of the stories selected, their location and placement in the papers, is given in Chart 1.

A list of stories selected was provided on the interviewer form. Interviewers were told to ask which daily paper was usually read and to inquire about the good and bad news story selected for the study in that paper, e.g., if the respondent said the Herald-Examiner was usually read, he was asked if he rememebered a (good) story about an American winning a Nobel Prize and if he remembered a (bad) story about a Hollywood actor and dancer who died. If the respondent did remember the story, he was asked if he knew a selected fact about the story, e.g., what was the field of specialty of the Nobel Prize winner; what was the name of the actor who died.

A total of 559 telephone interviews were completed for the three dates, but no attempt was made to balance for sex or to record the number of calls and call-backs interviewers made. The only demographic characteristic collected was the interviewer determining the sex of the person who responded. Although the final tally indicated women were over represented (59.3% were female), there is no reason to suspect the sample was biased in ways other than those normally suspected by using telephone book listings and interviewing the first adult who answered the phone.

Since the study involves both a content analysis and public survey, analysis is divided into these two segments.

The Content Analysis

The figures in Table 1 show that the Long Beach Independent, a morning paper, registered the highest percentage of good news (50.8%) with the San Diego Evening Tribune, an afternoon paper, registering the least good news (24.5%) when considering both page one and the inside page. When only the front page news was considered the Long Beach Independent still held the lead (49.1%) for the most good news and the Evening Tribune had the least good news (22.2%), according to Table 2.

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table 1 about here

Three of the newspapers had higher pecentages of good news on their front pages than bad and five had higher percentages of bad news on page one, (Table 2). The Orange County Register, which publishes both morning and afternoon, had a higher percentage of bad news on its cover page. Of those three newspapers with higher percentages of good news, two were morning papers and one was an afternoon. Of the five with more bad news on page one, three were afternoon and two were morning. These figures tend to indicate that the results do not support the idea that afternoon newspapers print more bad news than good. However, Table 1 shows that two afternoon newspapers had the highest percentage of bad news--the Long Beach Press-Telegram with 53.5% and the Los Angeles Herald-Examiner with 50.9% bad news.

A pattern of consistency in the ratio of good to bad news does appear to emerge tentatively in Table 1. When the indeterminate category is eliminated and only good and bad news categories are compared, the range in the eight papers from an equal balance of good and bad news is between 11.6 and 6%, with the exception of the San Diego Union which registered 2.8%. The average range was 8%. In the survey papers the amount of good news over bad, or bad over good, varies only about 8% when the indeterminate news category is removed.

In analyzing the results of figures in Table 1, it is apparent that San Diego coders found a much higher percentage of indeterminate news. These indeterminate categories for the three papers gained higher percentages than either the good or the bad. Long Beach coders had much less difficulty placing the stories in good and bad categories, and may have felt more pressed to make a good or bad distinction.

The high figures in the indeterminate categories of the San Diego papers indicate that this category needs further study. Perhaps such news makes the difference in the perception of how much good and bad news newspapers publish. In the case of the San Diego papers as well as the Orange County edition of the Los Angeles Times, the Orange County Register and the Daily Breeze, if the indeterminate percentage were added to either the good or the bad category, one category would heavily outweigh the other, as indicated in Table 1. The total figures in Table 1 show that on the average the nine papers had almost a one-third split between good, bad and indeterminate news.

One cannot be certain what the results would be if the indeterminate category of the San Diego papers had been lower. It appears

that perhaps an approximately equal number might be considered good and bad, judging from the two newspapers with the lowest indeterminate percentage. The Long Beach Independent registered a 7.6% indeterminate rate with 50.8% in good news and 41.6% in bad news. Likewise, the Long Beach Press-Telegram with the lowest indeterminate percentage of 1.2 reflected 45.3% good news and 53.5% bad news, according to Table 1.

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table 2 about here

However, it is interesting to note in Table 2 that the Long Beach coders found the Los Angeles Times' Orange County edition on its page one had 45.1% good news, 39.3% bad news, and 15.5% indeterminate news. The San Diego coders found the Los Angeles Times' San Diego County edition had on its page one 25.7% good news, 35.0% bad news and 39.4% indeterminate news. The Los Angeles Times does not replate its front page, changing only the inside pages. Therefore, students were coding the same page yet came up with a different set of figures. However, if 20 per cent of the indeterminate news of the San Diego edition were taken, leaving 15% in that category (as was reflected in the Orange County edition category), and added to the good news figure in Table 2, an almost identical coding would result.

The raw data on number of stories coded for the two editions of the Los Angeles Times (Orange County and San Diego) showed four Long Beach coders logged 1,571 items during the month for an average 392 items each. This compares with six San Diego coders tabulating 2,238 items or 373 each. The average difference of 19 items for each coder is less than one each day for the entire month.

An evaluation of inside page news in Table 3 shows seven of the nine newspapers printed more good news on the inside pages than bad news. The two which showed more bad news inside were the Herald-Examiner with .8% more bad than good and the Los Angeles Times' San Diego edition with 6.7%.

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table 3 about here

In analyzing the data researchers found the figures do not show that newspapers print more bad than good news.

Some final observations on the amount of good and bad news in the newspapers' sample are in order. More coding of other months of the year needs to be done on these nine newspapers to compare with these results to determine whether October, 1978, was a typical month. It can be argued that the death of the Pope and the San Diego crash of the Pacific Southwest Airlines plane in September were still being felt in the newspapers in October. In addition, serious mudslides in the community of Laguna Beach and fires in Los Angeles weighted the news in favor of the bad. However, the impact of using one month's papers can only be determined if several other months were studied.

The Survey

Descriptive data from the telephone surveys of this study provide initial evidence which supports some of the hypotheses about the impact of good and bad news on the public's consciousness. Table 4 offers the descriptive data and shows first that there were some distinct differences between the samples in the two geographic areas with San Diego residents being more frequent readers and being better able to remember the good news story from the San Diego papers. Los

Angeles residents were more likely to remember the bad fact.

table 4 about here

Overall, however, there is no distinction between the sample's ability to remember good versus bad news stories: about 43% of the entire sample is able to remember either story when the three interview days are combined. Table 5 presents the sample's recall ability when interview dates are controlled. Again, there is no signficant difference in ability to recall either the good or bad news story for the entire sample. There is, however, a signficant difference in the ability to recall facts pertaining to the two types of stories, with more fact recall for the bad news story on the first day following the newspaper's carrying the story and on the seventh day.

table 5 about here

The evidence from this survey supports the study's third hypothesis, that the impact of good and bad news (via recall) is virtually the same. The single exception is the finding that bad news story details are generally better remembered than the details of good news stories, especially immediately after the news is disseminated and again after a one-week lapse of time.

Findings presented in survey Table 5 demand rejection of the fourth hypothesis which stated that recall would drop with the passage of time. General recall of both the good and bad news stories remains stable during the entire week of interviewing and recall of the bad news story facts also remain stable. The good news fact recall increased on the third interview day and dropped slightly below its original level of 20% by the seventh day. Although the patterns are

mixed, they do not support the notion of geometric decrease in fact recall with the passage of time.

Table 6 presents the data for hypotheses five and six which state frequent readers and males will have better recall of both good and bad news stories. Hypothesis five is tentatively supported as there is a significant difference between self-declared regular readers and non-readers in all of the recall categories. But hypothesis six is rejected as a significant difference between recall by sex is found only for recall of the bad news story fact.

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table 6 about here

The data is reworked using a more discriminating readership variable than the self-declared regular reader. Table 7 presents a geographic area breakdown using the median days per week a respondent said the newspaper was read as the "regular" reader criterion. Although the recall figures for the Los Angeles area regular readers is approximately twice that of Los Angeles respondents who are not regular readers, there is little difference in recall for San Diego regular and non-regular readers.

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table 7 about here

The data in Table 7 lead to several observations that need to be enumerated at this point:

• Recall of the facts of a story, either the good or bad type, is a function of overall recall of the story--about half as many respondents will remember a signficant fact in the story as the

total number of respondents who said they remembered the story itself, but the ratio is not consistent.

- Generally, bad story facts are better remembered than are facts from good stories, but the finding is not consistent.

- Recall by Los Angeles area respondents is different from that by San Diego respondents across all categories of story and fact types.

- Use of median number of reading days (rather than self-declared "regular" reader designations) results in substantially different responses in the several recall categories.

In all, the patterns in Table 7 show little or no consistency and lead to the rejection of the previously supported hypothesis five. Self-declared regular newspaper readers do have better recall of stories and facts, but when the more frequent readers are contrasted with the less frequent readers in this survey, recall is inconsistent.

Hypothesis seven suggests the impact of the news stories on the public's recall will be different depending on discrete news values rather than just the umbrella categories of good versus bad news. Unfortunately, there were not enough stories for the different types of news values tested in this study to verify the hypothesis. The following story recall percentages (taken from charts 1 and 2) and the number of stories on which the percentage is based indicate substantial differences based on traditional news values: Sex (1), 66%; Novelty (1), 59%; Eminence-Prominence (4), 55%; Consequence (4), 48%; and, Human Interest (5), 38%. Although the recall percentages contradict one writer's suggestion that human interest stories would be better remembered, there is not enough stability in the percentages

to draw conclusions.[9] But the percentage differences do encourage another study centering on news story values as the independent variable in a public impact investigation of good and bad news.

Table 5 presents recall differences based on which newspaper the respondent said was usually read.

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table 8 about here

Figures presented in Table 8 emphasize the earlier finding that bad news is not remembered better than good news. The table's figures also refute the idea that recall is inherently better depending on the newspaper's time of publication. Although the afternoon San Diego Tribune had the highest recall level for all types of news, the next highest was for the Register, an all-day paper, followed by the morning Los Angeles Times Orange County edition. There is not even a consistent pattern of recall for both good and bad news by individual papers. The San Diego Tribune has the highest recall of both good and bad news, and the San Diego edition of the Los Angeles Times has the lowest, but several papers have significantly different recall levels for good versus bad news.

The final hypothesis of the study states that recall of either good or bad news is a function of the traditional media saliencies of page placement or size in newspapers and breadth of coverage by broadcast as well as print media. Table 6 presents recall percentages for good news, bad news and both types of news. There are no consistent differences in recall of good versus bad news. In only three instances are there significant and consistent patterns based on the traditional media saliences: 1) a non-local story has

higher recall than a local story; 2) a story of a continuing event has higher recall than one which does not continue; and 3) a story getting more broadcast coverage also has more public recall. The three are related in that a non-local story or a continuing story have more opportunity for greater national impact and thus are more likely to receive attention on national television.

In all, the findings support the idea that nationally important or interesting stories will have better public recall and that these stories are likely to be non-local. But this study finds little or no difference in public recall of good or bad news based on any other of the traditional newspaper size or placement categories. Perhaps with a larger data base (in this case many more stories representing more of a variety of size or placement decisions) the tentative patterns indicated in this study might have provided believable significant differences upon which judgments could have been made.

It is difficult to leave the public impact analysis without discussing the many significant--yet inconsistent--differences that permeate the tables. The researchers believe the survey respondents were reacting less to the imposed distinction between good and bad news but were reacting to the individual story in every case. Hence, the researchers feel respondents may have remembered a story if it interested them. This uses-and-gratificiations rationale explains how a good story in one paper might have had high public impact while a bad story in the same paper also could have high impact. Unfortunately the study is not designed to offer more substantial evidence of this possible explanation of the findings.

Summary of Findings

The content analysis of papers showed an approximate split

among good, bad and indeterminate news, with a slightly higher bad news percentage when averaged over-all. Afternoon papers in the study contained no more bad news than did morning papers, although one afternoon paper registered the least good news and two afternoon papers registered the highest level of bad news. The amounts of good news to bad did not seem to be equal, though the range from a 50-50 split varied only about eight per cent. The indeterminate category, particularly in the San Diego area newspapers, was so high it precluded precise analysis.

The analysis of public impact (recall) of good and bad news in newspapers yielded only a few findings which either definitely supported or refuted hypotheses. The researchers found recall of either good or bad stories remained stable during the week-long interviewing period. Recall of both good and bad news was related to self-declared readership frequency (both good and bad news were remembered more by those saying they regularly read a daily newspaper), but there was no difference in recall ability when the respondents were divided at the median number of days-per-week readership level in each geographic location. There was no difference in recall by sex. The only media saliency items that related to greater recall were non-local stories, continuing stories and those receiving more broadcast media attention.

The single consistent finding in the public impact analysis was that there is no difference in public recall of good versus bad news stories in newspapers.

Conclusions

The study contained noticeable methodological problems which

could not have been anticipated in the design stage. A desire to include an "indeterminate" news category--to avoid forcing a story having either imperceptible or questionable tone into either the good or bad category--resulted in an unexpectedly large percentage of total content being left in this third category. Then, although the study involved a huge amount of content analysis, too few stories were later determined to be in the traditional news value categories of "sex" or "novelty." Since these two types of stories received the highest percent of recall, an exact understanding of public impact by traditional news values was imposssible.

However, the study proved useful in several ways. It allowed researchers to approximate the splits between good and bad news and it pointed out the possible importance of the indeterminate news category, which may be the area in which the most variation exists among people judging what is good and what is bad. The study suggests more specific criteria are needed to answer the question of how much good and how much bad news newspapers are publishing. Future research is planned into what effects are at play in people's minds when they judge what is good and what is bad news.

While there were shortcomings in the survey portion of the study, data analysis in this area definitely supported the idea that the public perceives little difference in the amount of good and bad news in newspapers; there was no significant, consistent difference in recall of either stories or facts based on the good-bad distinction. The industry can feel confident that both popular opinion and recent critics such as Spiro Agnew are simply mistaken.

CHART 1--Good news stories detailed with media saliencies.

Paper	News Value & Topic	Page One	Page Top	Head Cols.	Pic-ture	Local	Con-tinued	TV-Radio	Recall Story	Recall Fact
L.B. Inde-pendent	Human Interest; Couple remarried after years	N[1]	Y[2]	4	Y	N	N	S[3]	29%	53%[4]
L.B. Press-Telegram	Consequence; Lower car insurance possible	Y	Y	2	N	Y	N	L[5]	40%	24%
L.A. Times	Consequence; Lower car insurance possible	N	Y	2	N	Y	N	L	53%	28%
Herald-Examiner	Eminence-Prominence; American economist wins Nobel Prize	N	N	2	Y	N	N	Y[6]	50%	14%
Orange Co. Register	Human Interest; Couple remarried after years	N	Y	2	Y	N	N	S	52%	58%
Daily Breeze	Proximity; Local historic hotel saved for senior citizens' home	N	Y	6	Y	Y	N	L	40%	--
S.D. Union	Human Interest; Local girl, father reunited	N	Y	1	N	Y	N	L	47%	51%
S.D. Tribune	Consequence; Local joblessness drops	Y	N	1	N	Y	Y	L	76%	40%
S.D. (L.A.) Times	Human Interest-Proximity; Local lagoon to be bird preserve	N	Y	1	N	Y	N	S	22%	25%

[1]N=no; [2]Y=yes; [3]S=small amount, possibly local radio or brief local television spots; [4]the percentage recalling the fact is taken from those who have first recalled the story; [5]L=local television coverage probable; [6]Y=in TV-Radio column indicates national television coverage as well as local coverage.

CHART 2--Bad news stories detailed with media saliencies.

Paper	News Value & Topic	Page One	Page Top	Head Cols.	Pic-ture	Local	Con-tinued	TV-Radio	Recall Story	Recall Fact
L.B. Inde-pendent	Novelty; Second of two Siamese twins dies	N[1]	Y[2]	1	Y	N	Y	Y[3]	59%	37%[4]
L.B. Press-Telegram	Eminence-Prominence; Actor Dan Dailey dies	Y	N	2	N	N	N	Y	55%	82%
L.A. Times	Conflict; Navy flier's ordeal with PCP drugs	N	N	3	Y	N	Y	Y	50%	86%
Herald-Examiner	Eminence-Prominence; Actor Dan Dailey dies	N	N	3	Y	N	N	Y	43%	83%
Orange Co. Register	Sex-Consequence; Report shows unwed births up	N	N	3	N	N	N	S[5]	66%	36%
Daily Breeze	Conflict-Proximity; Open school blamed for local crime wave increase	Y	N	2	N	Y	N	N	20%	--
S.D. Union	Consequence; Senator tells local students health care crisis near	N	N	3	N	Y	N	N	22%	43%
S.D. Tribune	Eminence-Prominence, Conflict; Dirty tricks in governor's race	Y	N	3	N	Y	Y	L[6]	71%	56%
S.D. (L.A.) Times	Human Interest-Proximity; Local couple suing agency for bad travel experinece	N	N	2	N	Y	N	N	38%	75%

[1]N=no; [2]Y=yes; [3]Y=in TV-Radio column indicates national television coverage as well as local coverage; [4]the percentage recalling the fact is taken from those who have first recalled the story; [5]S=small amount, possibly local radio or brief local television spots; [6]L=local television coverage probable.

TABLE 1: Good, bad and indeterminate items on the front page and inside page of nine Southern California newspapers during October, 1978, in percentages.

	Good News	Bad News	Indeterminate News
L.B. Independent (n=316)[1]	50.8%	41.6%	7.6%
L.B. Press-Telegram (n=258)	45.3	53.5	1.2
L.A. Times, Orange County edition (n=393)	46.1	37.2	16.6
Herald-Examiner (n=254)	39.3	50.9	9.9
Orange County Register (n=434)	34.3	44.2	21.4
Daily Breeze (n=320)	45.0	39.4	15.6
San Diego Union (n=320)	29.5	32.3	38.1
S.D. Tribune (n=317)	24.5	32.1	43.4
L.A. Times, San Diego edition (n=373)	26.5	35.1	38.3
Total (n=340)	33.8	36.7	29.5

[1] the number of cases is an average number of stories derived by dividing the total number of coders who analyzed each paper into the total number of stories analyzed by all coders of that newspaper.

TABLE 2: Good, bad and indeterminate items on the front pages of nine Southern California newspapers.

	Good News	Bad News	Indeterminate News
Long Beach Independent	49.1%	42.3%	8.5%
Long Beach Press-Telegram	34.7	64.1	1.2
L.A. Times Orange County	45.1	39.3	15.5
Herald-Examiner	36.2	51.4	12.3
Orange Co. Register	30.8	52.1	17.1
Daily Breeze	44.1	39.7	16.2
San Diego Union	29.7	34.5	35.9
San Diego Tribune	22.2	36.6	41.2
L.A. Times San Diego	25.7	35.0	39.4
Total	32.3	39.0	28.6

TABLE 3: Good, bad and indeterminate items on the inside pages of nine Southern California newspapers.

	Good News	Bad News	Indeterminate News
Long Beach Independent	53.8%	40.3%	5.9%
Long Beach Press-Telegram	65.6	34.4	0.0
L.A. Times Orange Co.	49.0	31.3	19.7
Herald-Examiner	48.4	49.2	2.4
Orange Co. Register	45.3	19.8	34.9
Daily Breeze	46.1	39.0	14.9
San Diego Union	29.3	28.6	42.1
San Diego Tribune	29.3	22.6	48.1
L.A. Times San Diego	28.9	35.6	35.6
Total	37.1	31.5	31.3

TABLE 4: Descriptive data by each geographic area and for all respondents.

Item	L.A. Area (n=378)	San Diego (n=181)	All (n=559)
Percent reading a daily paper regularly	74.6	94.4	81.
Mean days per week usually reads paper	4.32	5.86	4.82
Percent remembering good story	36.6	56.1	42.8
Percent remembering fact in good story	22.0	22.7	22.3
Percent remembering bad story	45.1	39.2	43.2
Percent remembering fact in bad story	35.2	19.9	28.5

TABLE 5: Ability to remember good and bad stories and facts by elapsed survey days.

Story Type		Percent Remembered By All	P
First Day	Good Story	42.9	NS
	Bad Story	40.8	
Second Day	Good Story	46.2	NS
	Bad Story	43.4	
Seventh Day	Good Story	38.3	.05
	Bad Story	45.9	
Fact From Story Type			
First Day	Good Fact	19.7	.05
	Bad Fact	26.6	
Second Day	Good Fact	27.1	NS
	Bad Fact	30.3	
Seventh Day	Good Fact	19.0	.05
	Bad Fact	28.3	

TABLE 6: Recall ability by self-determined regular readership and by respondent's sex.

	Regular Reader (n=420)	Non-Regular Reader (n=105)	P	Male (n=210)	Female (n=314)	P
Remembered Good Story	48%	19%	.001	40%	45%	NS
Remembered Good Fact	25	2	.001	24	21	NS
Remembered Bad Story	48	24	.001	45	42	NS
Remembered Bad Fact	30	15	.01	33	24	.05

TABLE 7: Recall by regular readership using median number of days a week in each geographic area as a criterion of regular readership.

	% Remember Good Story	% Remember Good Fact	% Remember Bad Story	% Remember Bad Fact
L.A. Area Regular Reader (n=234)	49%	26%	58%	43%
S.D. Area Regular Reader (n=146)	59	27	39	19
L.A. Non-Regular Reader (n=144)	17	13	24	15
S.D. Non-Regular Reader (n=35)	43	6	40	23

TABLE 8: Recall of good, bad and all news story types by newspaper usually read.

	% Recalling Good Story	% Recalling Bad Story	% Recalling Both Stories
L.B. Independent (Morning)	29%	59%	44%
L.B. Press-Telegram (Afternoon)	40	55	48
L.A. Times (O.C.) (Morning)	53	50	51
Herald-Examiner (Afternoon)	50	43	46
Orange Co. Register (All Day)	52	66	59
S.D. Union (Morning)	47	22	35
S.D. Tribune (Afternoon)	76	71	73
L.A. Times (S.D.) (Morning)	22	38	31
Other Newspapers[1]	28	37	32

[1] The Daily Breeze, an L.A. area daily, is counted with the group of "other" newspapers as only five persons in the survey listed it as the newspaper they usually read.

TABLE 9: Recall of story type and fact by traditional media salency indicators.

	Average % Recall Of Good Story	Average % Recall of Bad Story	Average % Recall Of Both Stories
Not on Page One	44%	48%	46%
On Page One	58	49	52
Bottom of Page	63%	49%	56%
Top of Page	44	59	52
1 or 2-col. Head	53%	45%	49%
3-col. & Larger Head	35	50	43
Without Picture	53%	47%	50%
With Picture	43	51	47
Not Local	51%	55%	53%
Local	46	38	42
Not Continuing	43%	47%	45%
Continuing Event	58	50	54
Little or No TV Coverage	34%	36	35
Local TV Coverage	53	47	50
National TV Coverage	50	55	53

FOOTNOTES

1. "Paper Presents Batch of Good News to Prince," Los Angeles Times, November 13, 1978, p. 1, col. 4.

2. Michael C. Emery and Ted Curtis Smythe, "Readings in Mass Communication: Concepts and Issues in the Mass Media," 2nd ed., (Dubuque: William C. Brown, 1974), 497-506.

3. James Bylin, "Papers and TV Outlets Stress 'Good' News; Response Is Positive," Wall Street Journal, p. 1, col. 1.

4. Charles E. Swanson, "What They Read in 130 Daily Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly, 32 (1955), 411-421.

5. Guido H. Stempel III, "A Factor Analytic Study of Reader Interest in News," Journalism Quarterly, 44 (1967), 326-330.

6. Robert W. Clyde, "News Readership as a Function of Several Affective Characteristics," Journalism Quarterly, 45 (1968), 535-537.

7. Jack B. Haskins, "'Cloud With a Silver Lining' Approach to Violence News," Journalism Quarterly, 50 (1973), 549-552.

8. Walter Gieber, "Do Newspapers Overplay 'Negative' News?" Journalism Quarterly, 32 (1955), 311-318.

9. Haskins, loc. cit.